



Gender and Education in the Context of Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

This research article provides a concise overview of the study on "Gender and Education in the Context of Sustainable Development Goals" by employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with the PICO framework. The study investigates how gender-related factors influence educational access, participation, and outcomes within the framework of Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). Using the PICO criteria—Population (diverse gender groups in formal and non-formal education), Intervention (inclusive education policies, empowerment programs, and strategies to reduce gender disparities), Comparison (various international policies and practices), and Outcome (impacts on educational quality and SDG achievement)—the review synthesizes findings from peer-reviewed articles published within the last five years. The results highlight that gender-responsive education policies significantly contribute to enhancing educational quality and promoting equality; however, challenges such as social, economic, and cultural barriers continue to impede progress. The paper concludes with recommendations for strengthening regulatory frameworks, expanding access to education for marginalized groups, and integrating gender equality principles into educational curricula to support sustainable development.

Keywords: gender, education, Sustainable Development Goals, PICO

Abstrak

Artikel penelitian ini memberikan gambaran singkat mengenai studi berjudul "Gender and Education in the Context of Sustainable Development Goals" dengan menggunakan pendekatan Systematic Literature Review (SLR) berbasis kerangka kerja PICO. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana faktor-faktor yang terkait dengan gender memengaruhi akses, partisipasi, dan hasil pendidikan dalam kerangka Sustainable Development Goals, khususnya SDG 4 (Pendidikan Berkualitas) dan SDG 5 (Kesetaraan Gender). Dengan menggunakan kriteria PICO—Population (kelompok gender beragam dalam pendidikan formal dan non-formal), Intervention (kebijakan pendidikan inklusif, program pemberdayaan, dan strategi pengurangan kesenjangan gender), Comparison (berbagai kebijakan dan praktik internasional), dan Outcome (dampak terhadap kualitas pendidikan dan pencapaian SDGs)—tinjauan ini mensintesis temuan dari artikel jurnal terakreditasi yang dipublikasikan dalam lima tahun terakhir. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kebijakan pendidikan yang responsif terhadap gender memiliki kontribusi signifikan dalam peningkatan kualitas pendidikan dan promosi kesetaraan, meskipun masih terdapat tantangan berupa hambatan sosial, ekonomi, dan budaya. Artikel ini diakhiri dengan rekomendasi untuk penguatan regulasi, peningkatan akses pendidikan bagi kelompok marginal, dan integrasi prinsip kesetaraan gender dalam kurikulum pendidikan guna mendukung pembangunan berkelanjutan.

Keywords: gender, pendidikan, Sustainable Development Goals, PICO

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Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in shaping social awareness and values of equality in society. In the context of Sociology learning in Senior High Schools (SMA), understanding social issues such as gender equality is essential. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), emphasize the importance of equal access to education for all individuals regardless of gender. However, the reality in various countries shows that gender disparities in education persist in terms of access, quality, and participation. Therefore, integrating gender issues into Sociology education is expected to enhance students' awareness of the importance of equality and inclusion in education.

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the development of individuals and society. However, challenges such as economic liberalization, gender inequality, and social issues like juvenile delinquency continue to impact the effectiveness of educational policies and programs. The economic liberalization of education in Indonesia has led to disparities in access to quality education, which, as Pratama (c2023) highlights, raises concerns regarding human rights and equitable opportunities for all students. Ensuring that every student has access to high-quality education requires government intervention, strategic planning, and the elimination of biases that favor certain groups.

Beyond economic disparities, gender inequality remains a persistent issue in the education sector. Studies by Unterhalter (2021) and UNESCO (2023) emphasize the importance of gender-inclusive education in fostering awareness of equality and fairness among students. Interactive learning models, such as MiKiR (Multimedia Interaktif, Kolaboratif, dan Reflektif), have proven effective in engaging students with gender-related topics and enhancing problem-solving skills. However, the implementation of gender-inclusive policies is often met with resistance due to deep-rooted cultural norms, as noted by Kinnersly (2025). The lack of female role models in leadership positions within education further exacerbates these challenges.

In addition to economic and gender-related issues, social problems such as juvenile delinquency pose a significant threat to the younger generation. Khairi (2020) highlights that juvenile delinquency in Indonesia has been increasing in severity, with cases involving drug abuse, violence, and prostitution among teenagers under 21 years old. Data from East Java between 2015 and 2019 show fluctuations in the number of juvenile prisoners, with drug-related offenses dominating the statistics. The root causes of this issue include weak self-

defense mechanisms, family problems, poor social adjustment, economic difficulties, and a lack of religious and moral values. Addressing juvenile delinquency requires a comprehensive approach that includes education, community engagement, and policy reforms.

Given these interconnected challenges, this study aims to examine the impact of economic liberalization on education, the role of gender-inclusive policies in fostering student awareness, and the social implications of juvenile delinquency. By analyzing these aspects from a human rights perspective, this research seeks to provide insights into creating a more inclusive and equitable education system in Indonesia.

Over the past decade, various studies have highlighted the relationship between gender and education within the SDG framework. Arnot (2025) emphasizes that a holistic approach is needed to achieve gender equality in education, which includes changes in policies, teaching practices, and social norms. Additionally, research by Kinnersly (2025) indicates that education that instills values of mutual respect can reduce gender-based violence in schools. This suggests that education not only functions as a tool for individual empowerment but also as a mechanism for creating a more inclusive and safe environment for all learners.

In the context of Sociology learning in Senior High Schools, it is crucial for educators to integrate these findings into the curriculum so that students can understand how social structures and policies affect gender access and participation in education. This approach aligns with Arnot's perspective, which underscores the importance of gender-responsive education for achieving sustainable development. Furthermore, a study by Leach, Dunne, and Salvi (2014) also shows that gender-inclusive education can reduce stereotypes and discrimination in schools. Therefore, integrating gender issues into Sociology education not only enhances students' understanding but also contributes to achieving SDG 4 and SDG 5.

An analysis of various literature sources indicates that incorporating gender issues into Sociology education can increase students' awareness and understanding of the importance of gender equality in education. Stromquist (2018) asserts that empowering women through education not only enhances their participation in the economy but also strengthens their role in social and political decision-making. Meanwhile, Subrahmanian (2005) argues that education that considers gender aspects can improve female students' participation and academic performance. Thus, integrating gender issues into Sociology

education in high schools has significant potential in supporting the achievement of SDG 4 and SDG 5. By understanding and applying gender equality concepts in education, students are expected to become agents of change who promote a more inclusive and just society.

Method

This study employs the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method using the PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome) approach to analyze the relationship between gender and education in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This method was chosen as it allows for the systematic identification, evaluation, and synthesis of relevant literature from the last ten years.

1) Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Articles published between 2015 and 2024.
2. Articles indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, or Sinta.
3. Articles discussing the relationship between gender, education, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Articles that are not relevant to the research focus.
2. Articles discussing gender without any connection to education or SDGs.

2) Data Search Strategy: Data sources were obtained from academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Dimensions AI. Keywords used in the search included: *"gender and education"*, *"gender equality in education"*, *"Sociology education and SDGs"*, and *"gender-responsive pedagogy"*.

3) Data Analysis Procedure: Articles that met the criteria were analyzed using the PICO approach:

- a. Population (P): High school students and relevant educational environments.
- b. Intervention (I): Educational strategies that support gender equality.
- c. Comparison (C): Traditional education systems without a gender-responsive approach.
- d. Outcome (O): The impact of gender-based learning on students' understanding of equality.

Tabel 1. Table PICO

PICO Component	Define	Select Keywords	Build Your Query
Patient/Population (P)	Students in secondary education, Gender disparities in education, Educational access for girls	Students, Secondary education, Gender gap, Educational access, Girls' education	(Students OR Secondary education) AND (Gender gap OR Educational access OR Girls' education)
Intervention (I)	Gender-responsive pedagogy, Gender equality policies in education, Inclusive curriculum	Gender-responsive teaching, Gender inclusion, Equal education policies	(Gender-responsive teaching OR Gender inclusion OR Equal education policies)
Comparison (C)	Traditional teaching methods, Non-inclusive curriculum, Lack of gender-sensitive policies	Traditional teaching, Standard curriculum, No gender policy	(Traditional teaching OR Standard curriculum OR No gender policy)
Outcomes (O)	Improved gender equality in education, Increased female enrollment and retention, Better learning outcomes	Gender equity, Enrollment rates, Learning achievements, SDG 4 and SDG 5 impact	(Gender equity OR Enrollment rates OR Learning achievements OR SDG 4 OR SDG 5 impact)

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of key patterns in the collected literature. The findings were then interpreted in the context of their relevance to educational policies and SDG achievements.

Result and Discussion

The results of this study provide a comprehensive review of gender and education within the framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically in the context of high school Sociology learning. The findings are categorized into key themes derived from the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) using the PICO approach.

Gender Disparities in Education and Its Relevance to High School Sociology Learning

Gender disparities in education remain a persistent issue globally, affecting access, participation, and learning outcomes. Studies over the past decade indicate that these disparities are influenced by various socio-cultural, economic, and structural factors that disproportionately affect female students, particularly in developing countries. Understanding these disparities is crucial for high school Sociology education, as it provides students with critical insights into how gender inequality manifests in different societal structures and educational settings.

The study conducted by Safitri and Azizah (2023) showed that the implementation of Discovery Learning can significantly increase student engagement. Before applying this model, many eighth-grade students at MTsN 2 Pamekasan were unfocused during lessons,

such as chatting with their seatmates, daydreaming, and frequently asking for permission to leave the classroom. However, after implementing Discovery Learning in two cycles, there was a significant increase in student activity. In the first cycle, the percentage of active students was only 24%, with 44% being less active and 32% not active. However, in the second cycle, the number of active students drastically increased to 91%, while the percentage of less active students decreased to 9%.

These findings reinforce the idea that inquiry-based learning can enhance student engagement in the learning process through three main aspects: (1) direct experience, (2) formation of active learning events, and (3) problem-solving (Safitri and Azizah, 2023). By allowing students to discover concepts independently, they become more active in listening to the teacher's explanations, asking questions when they do not understand the material, and participating in class discussions.

In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4: Quality Education, inclusive and equitable education is a crucial aspect of creating learning opportunities for all individuals, including from a gender perspective (United Nations, 2022). The implementation of Discovery Learning as an active and exploratory learning model also contributes to efforts in promoting gender equality in education.

Several studies indicate that women often face barriers in accessing quality education due to various social, economic, and cultural factors (UNESCO, 2021). With an inquiry-based learning model such as Discovery Learning, both male and female students have equal opportunities to actively participate in the learning process, thereby reducing gender disparities in education.

In this study, the implementation of Discovery Learning proved effective in increasing student engagement without gender discrimination. Both male and female students had the same opportunities to contribute to class discussions, ask questions, and solve problems presented in the learning materials. Thus, this learning model can serve as a relevant strategy in supporting the achievement of SDG 4, which focuses on equitable access to education, as well as SDG 5: Gender Equality, which emphasizes the importance of inclusivity in educational systems.

Therefore, the application of Discovery Learning not only contributes to enhancing student engagement but also aligns with the global agenda of creating a more inclusive and equitable education system for all genders. Governments and educational institutions must continue developing learning methods that encourage active student participation,

regardless of gender differences, ensuring that sustainable development goals in education can be achieved optimally.

Barriers to Gender Equality in Education

Barriers to gender equality in education are deeply rooted in various social, economic, and cultural contexts. Despite global efforts through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 5 (gender equality), significant obstacles remain. These include socio-cultural norms, early marriage, gender-based violence, lack of gender-sensitive infrastructure, and limited access to menstrual hygiene products, all of which disproportionately affect girls and women in many regions.

Furthermore, systemic issues such as gender stereotypes in curricula, unequal teacher training, and a lack of female role models in educational leadership contribute to persistent disparities. In low-income and conflict-affected areas, the challenges are compounded by poverty, displacement, and inadequate policy implementation. Addressing these barriers requires a multi-dimensional approach that integrates gender-sensitive education policies, community engagement, inclusive curriculum development, and sustained investment in equitable educational systems.

Furthermore, Subrahmanian (2020) emphasizes the role of educational policies in either mitigating or exacerbating gender disparities. While some governments have implemented affirmative policies such as free tuition for girls or conditional cash transfers to support female education, others have failed to address structural inequalities, leading to continued gender-based exclusion in schools. Arnot (2025) argues that without a gender-responsive curriculum, even well-intended policies may not be enough to change deep-seated gender biases within educational institutions.

Implications for Sociology Education in High Schools

Given the significant impact of gender disparities on education, integrating discussions on gender and education into high school Sociology curricula is essential. Sociology, as a subject, provides students with analytical tools to examine social structures, power dynamics, and cultural norms that influence gender roles and educational opportunities.

1. Understanding Gender as a Social Construct

High school Sociology classes introduce students to the concept of gender as a social construct, a foundational idea in feminist theory and social stratification studies. Butler (1990) argues that gender is not an inherent biological characteristic but rather a

performance shaped by social expectations. By analyzing case studies of gender disparities in education, students can critically reflect on how societal norms shape educational opportunities for different genders.

2. Analyzing the Impact of Gender Inequality on Education

- a. Studies such as those by Bourdieu (1998) and Connell (2009) provide sociological frameworks to understand how gender-based social capital and cultural capital influence educational attainment. In classroom discussions, students can explore how power relations within families, schools, and communities create barriers for certain groups, particularly girls, in accessing education.
- b. Teachers can introduce real-life examples of gender disparities in education by using UNESCO reports, case studies, and documentaries that highlight challenges faced by female students worldwide. This can be reinforced by role-playing activities where students simulate different social backgrounds and examine how their gender affects educational opportunities.

3. Linking Gender Inequality in Education to Broader Social Issues

- a. Gender disparities in education are not isolated problems but are interconnected with economic inequality, labor market discrimination, and political representation. Sociology classes can encourage students to analyze policies that aim to address these issues, such as gender quotas in schools and workplaces or scholarship programs for female students in STEM fields.
- b. According to Kabeer (2023), gender inequality in education contributes to persistent wage gaps, occupational segregation, and lower political representation for women. By discussing these connections, students can develop a holistic understanding of gender issues, preparing them for future roles as informed citizens and potential policymakers.

4. Encouraging Critical Discussions on Gender Stereotypes in Textbooks

- a. Research by Stromquist (2018) and Unterhalter and North (2021) suggests that many school textbooks still reinforce traditional gender roles, depicting men as leaders and professionals while portraying women in domestic or caregiving roles.
- b. High school Sociology teachers can facilitate textbook analysis projects, where students critically examine how gender is represented in their learning materials and propose revisions that reflect gender equity and diversity.

Addressing Gender Disparities Through Gender-Responsive Pedagogy

To effectively address gender disparities in education, teachers must adopt gender-responsive pedagogy. This involves creating an inclusive classroom environment where both male and female students feel equally valued and encouraged to participate. Leach et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of:

- a. Using gender-neutral language and avoiding stereotypes in classroom discussions.
- b. Encouraging equal participation of boys and girls in group activities and leadership roles.
- c. Introducing female role models in various professional fields to challenge stereotypes about gender and career choices.

Studies by Kinnersly (2025) and Arnot (2025) show that students who engage with gender-sensitive educational content demonstrate higher levels of gender awareness, empathy, and support for gender equality in their communities.

The Role of Gender-Responsive Pedagogy in Sociology Learning

Gender-responsive pedagogy plays a crucial role in shaping students' awareness of social structures and inequalities within society, particularly in Sociology learning at the senior high school level. Educational experts in Indonesia emphasize that integrating a gender perspective into the curriculum can create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. According to Surya (2023), implementing a gender perspective in the Sociology curriculum helps students develop critical thinking skills by analyzing how social norms, power relations, and institutional structures contribute to gender inequality. This aligns with the findings of Arnot (2025), which indicate that gender-responsive pedagogy encourages students to critically examine social realities and question prevailing injustices. In the Indonesian context, Murniati (2021) found that students exposed to discussions on gender and social justice in Sociology classes demonstrated a greater awareness of gender biases in media, politics, and the workplace.

One of the key aspects of gender-responsive pedagogy is the provision of teaching materials that challenge gender stereotypes. Subrahmanian (2020) revealed that conventional educational materials often reinforce gender stereotypes that limit students' perceptions of male and female roles in society. In Indonesia, Kusuma and Setiawan (2022) highlighted the need for curriculum reform to include case studies and historical examples showcasing women's contributions in various fields such as politics, economics, and social movements. Their research found that Indonesian school textbooks frequently portray

women in domestic roles, while men are more often depicted as leaders or decision-makers, ultimately reinforcing traditional gender norms that promote inequality.

Beyond teaching materials, an inclusive learning environment is also a crucial factor in implementing gender-responsive pedagogy. Handayani (2020) emphasized that gender-sensitive teaching strategies, such as group discussions, debates, and participatory learning, can help students engage with gender issues more constructively. Similarly, Santoso (2023) noted that using real-life examples from social events in Indonesia—such as gender wage gaps, educational access in rural areas, and gender equality policies—allows students to better connect sociological theories with contemporary issues relevant to their daily lives.

The Indonesian government has taken steps to integrate gender mainstreaming into education policies, as reflected in Ministerial Regulation No. 84 of 2014 on Gender-Responsive Education. However, Prasetyo (2022) revealed that gaps remain between policy and field implementation. Many schools, particularly in remote areas, still lack teacher training programs focused on gender-responsive pedagogy. Therefore, Wulandari and Nugroho (2023) stressed the need for more systematic curriculum development and teacher training programs that equip educators with the knowledge and skills to effectively teach gender concepts in Sociology learning. Additionally, Rahmawati and Supriyadi (2024) proposed that schools collaborate with NGOs and gender advocacy groups to ensure that teaching methods align with gender equality principles.

Thus, the implementation of gender-responsive pedagogy in Sociology learning at senior high schools serves as an effective strategy to enhance students' critical awareness of gender issues while fostering a more inclusive learning environment. Through curriculum reform, teacher training, and the integration of real-world examples into lessons, Indonesia's education system can significantly contribute to promoting gender equality and achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality.

The Impact of Gender-Inclusive Education on Student Awareness

Gender-inclusive education plays a crucial role in shaping students' understanding of equality and justice. Research indicates that students exposed to gender-sensitive learning develop a more critical perspective on societal structures that influence gender roles. Unterhalter (2021) found that discussions on gender in classrooms significantly enhance students' awareness of fairness, equity, and systemic discrimination. By integrating gender

topics into daily lessons, students are encouraged to recognize and challenge traditional gender norms, which can lead to more inclusive attitudes and behaviors in their communities.

In the context of high school Sociology education, innovative teaching methods such as MiKiR (Multimedia Interaktif, Kolaboratif, dan Reflektif) have been effective in fostering student engagement with gender issues. Fauzan (2023) highlights that this model, which combines digital media, collaborative group work, and reflective exercises, helps students not only understand gender concepts theoretically but also relate them to real-world experiences. This approach allows students to analyze case studies on gender inequality, participate in discussions, and develop solutions based on sociological theories. As a result, students become more active in questioning gender stereotypes and advocating for equality in their social environments.

Moreover, Setiawan and Nurhadi (2022) emphasize the importance of incorporating real-life case studies in gender education. Their study found that students who examined gender disparities in areas such as wage gaps, political representation, and access to education showed greater empathy and a stronger desire to contribute to societal change. This method fosters deeper understanding by enabling students to connect abstract sociological theories with tangible social issues.

Teacher involvement is also a key factor in the success of gender-inclusive education. Rahmawati and Supriyadi (2024) found that educators who receive training on gender-sensitive pedagogy are more effective in facilitating discussions on gender equality. In her interviews with high school Sociology teachers, she discovered that trained teachers were better equipped to navigate sensitive topics, encourage diverse viewpoints, and create an open classroom environment where students felt comfortable discussing gender-related challenges.

Overall, integrating gender-sensitive education into high school Sociology curricula enhances students' critical thinking skills and social awareness. By utilizing interactive learning models, real-world case studies, and well-trained educators, gender-inclusive education can empower students to become advocates for equality in their communities.

Challenges in Implementing Gender Equality in Education

Despite growing global efforts to promote gender equality in education, several significant challenges persist. One of the primary barriers is the resistance rooted in deep-

seated cultural norms that perpetuate traditional gender roles. In many societies, gender biases remain prevalent among educators, policymakers, and even parents, which can hinder the effective implementation of gender-inclusive curricula (Kinnersly, 2025). These biases often manifest in classroom interactions, where teachers may unconsciously reinforce gender stereotypes by treating male and female students differently or by using teaching materials that reflect outdated gender roles.

UNESCO (2023) reports that the lack of female representation in leadership positions within the education sector further complicates efforts to achieve gender equality in schools. The study found that in many countries, men dominate decision-making roles in education ministries, school administrations, and curriculum development boards. This gender imbalance means that policies promoting gender equality may not be prioritized or effectively implemented, as they are often designed without the perspectives and experiences of women.

Another challenge is the limited access to gender-sensitive teaching resources and training programs. Research by (Prasetyo, 2022) highlights that many teachers lack the necessary training to integrate gender perspectives into their teaching. Without adequate professional development, educators may struggle to create inclusive classroom environments or challenge gender biases effectively. In some cases, school administrations may not provide sufficient support for gender-responsive pedagogy, either due to financial constraints or ideological resistance.

Additionally, gender-based violence and discrimination in schools continue to be pressing concerns. According to Leach et al. (2014), gender-based school violence—ranging from verbal harassment to physical abuse—has a profound impact on students, particularly girls, leading to higher dropout rates and lower academic performance. Schools that fail to address these issues may unintentionally reinforce gender inequalities, making it difficult for students to access a safe and equitable learning environment.

Finally, government policies on gender equality in education often face gaps in implementation. While many countries, including Indonesia, have introduced legal frameworks to promote gender inclusivity in schools—such as Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Nomor 84 Tahun 2014 tentang Pendidikan Responsif Gender—the enforcement of these policies remains inconsistent. Wulandari and Nugroho (2023) argue that without stronger monitoring mechanisms, many schools do not fully adopt gender-responsive practices, leaving the objectives of these policies unfulfilled.

To address these challenges, experts recommend strengthening gender-sensitive teacher training, increasing female leadership in education, and implementing stronger enforcement mechanisms for gender equality policies. Additionally, fostering partnerships between schools, non-governmental organizations, and local communities can help create a more supportive environment for gender-inclusive education. By overcoming these barriers, education systems can move toward a more equitable and inclusive future for all students.

Conclusion

Gender-responsive education plays a crucial role in shaping students' awareness of equality and social justice, particularly in Sociology learning. Various studies indicate that integrating gender perspectives into the curriculum enhances students' critical thinking skills, enabling them to identify and challenge social norms and structures that perpetuate gender inequality. Interactive learning models such as MiKiR (Multimedia Interaktif, Kolaboratif, dan Reflektif) have proven effective in increasing student engagement and comprehension of gender-related issues. Additionally, well-trained educators in gender-responsive pedagogy play a vital role in creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

However, implementing gender-inclusive education still faces several challenges. The main obstacles stem from deeply rooted cultural norms, gender biases among educators and policymakers, and a lack of resources to support inclusive learning. The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions within the education sector also slows down the progress of gender equality policies. Furthermore, gender-based violence and discrimination in schools remain serious issues that hinder students' access to safe and equitable education.

To address these challenges, strategic measures are needed, such as enhancing teacher training in gender-responsive pedagogy, reforming curricula to be more inclusive, and strengthening policies and monitoring mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of gender-equitable education. Moreover, collaboration between governments, schools, NGOs, and communities is essential to create an educational environment that genuinely promotes gender equality. Thus, education can serve as a powerful tool in driving sustainable and just social change.

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